

God's Mirror (2)

To parents and loved ones

For many, your eyes may have just been opened to the complex world of ED. I hope that this helps you understand and have insight not just to the facts but the thoughts and sickness of one struggling. I know that insight into facts and causes doesn't make a loved one better, but I hope that seeing it through the eyes of a child that has suffered will help.

I have learned from the perspective of a child looking to my parents, during and after my struggle what I needed most from them and my loved ones. Looking back I wish I could take the hurt away from my loved ones. If it affects anyone the most it is parents. As a mother now it hurts deeply to see my child hurt physically. I try so hard to make that hurt go away. When a child struggles with an emotional and spiritual battle the hurt can only be intensified especially because the hurt is not so easy to take away.

I don't have the fix all or all the answers, but I know that God is the ultimate healer and a miraculous God. The best that you can do as a loved one is turn to God and pray. I know my parent's knees were calloused sending prayers on my behalf and I thank them for that. I also know that God is sovereign; he has all control and has a perfect plan. This may seem redundant; how many parents have prayed and God seems silent? God isn't silent; he always works his way in every heart, even in one who is struggling. I can see looking back God's spirit working gently and invisibly in my heart. He never leaves his child; in fact, during the times of struggle his presence is ever closer. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. 1:5b). He was holding me and he's holding your loved one.

Prayer to God on calloused knees is ultimately the most important thing a loved one or parent can do for a struggling child. Alongside I ask that you exercise patience, tenderness, and love. There are times when patience will be tested and when it would be easier to yell and become frustrated. So when those times come maybe all you can do is love, and tell them that, remind them of your love and God's love. The response may not be what you want, but love, especially God's love, penetrates the heart. Don't be their judge, be their upholder. This doesn't mean that you support their behavior or struggle, and it doesn't mean that you tell them everything they're doing wrong. Odds are they already know it. Instead, make sure they know that you understand that they are struggling and you are there if they need you. Don't expect to have lengthy conversations about their struggle. Many times parents are the last people, young people especially, want to talk to. But when those times come when they want to talk,

listen; don't try to fix or have all the answers. Showing understanding and support for them goes a long way. Patience is a hard thing to accomplish especially when the struggle can be so frustrating, and sometimes things get worse before they are better. I don't want you to think you should just sit back and do nothing, especially when things can get physically bad. But, I want loved ones to think beyond impatience and frustration. With plenty of prayer and by God's grace it can make the storm seem a little less threatening from both sides.

To those struggling

From a heart, soul and body that have hurt with the struggle with ED, I want to talk to those girls who are struggling. If I could hug all of you and take the hurt away I would. I know the frustration and also the determination in your struggle. You may be at a point that you don't think there is anything wrong; I was there once too. You may not think you have a problem - that you're just trying to lose a little weight or that you don't know how to handle issues in life any other way. I want you to look at your goal: is it healthy, is it what God wants for you, or is it turning into an obsession, or a way to control or numb? If you recognize yourself in what I have told you so far, it's time to begin dealing with it. This may be difficult. None of us want to say we have a problem, or even more, deal with it; it definitely isn't easy. But facing your problems is taking the right step in the direction of healing and freedom from the bondage of ED and the devil. I'm not going to tell you to snap out of it and just start eating, to stop binging and purging, or stop hurting yourself, because I know it's not that simple or easy.

I know what it feels like to spend day in and day out succumbed to ED. It feels like you're stuck, that your mind has a mind of its own - it's frustrating. I know that it many times feels like your life wouldn't be in control or organized without the constant need to control your weight, what you're eating or not eating and how many calories each meal contains. You feel that life would be chaos if you didn't exercise for hours daily and burn so many calories at each workout. You feel you would go crazy if you didn't know how much you weighed and how much weight you lost in a week. The image in the mirror is constantly taunting; you'll go to extreme cases to lose any ounce of fat you see. You may struggle with guilt. If you don't get rid of the meal you ate you feel like things will spin out of control. You may feel that if you haven't skipped a meal you'll spend the rest of your day trying to lose those calories. The list could go on and on. I have had those same thoughts and feelings, and I struggled also. I also know that it takes over your life, your thoughts, feelings and actions. Without ED you would be lost.

ED may seem like your friend, but he isn't, he is your worst enemy. He isn't someone you want to spend your life with, and although life may seem like it will fall apart

without him, it won't. ED is the devil's best friend and he is working so hard through ED to hurt you. He isn't going to give you what you are trying to grasp for. I know when I struggled I felt in control but had no peace. The devil is not a peacemaker, but he creates chaos. The thoughts and actions may seem so organized to one with ED, but looking at it from the outside, they don't make a lot of sense. And that is all part of what the devil wants when he uses ED. He wants you to feel a false sense of control; he wants you to look to him and yourself. He wants to fool you into listening to him and not God. Sound familiar? The devil has done that from the beginning of time when he told Eve to eat the apple and promised her she would be like God. "And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4, 5). His ugly fingers are always trying to make us fall for his devices and ways. He wants complete control and he wants to define you and tell who you are. He wants you in complete bondage to him and to be brutally honest, the devil doesn't just want control, he wants your life. He will not stop till he wins.

We each face sin in our lives and the devil's devices to tempt us and make us fall. When you choose to give your life to an ED you are choosing to take the devil's hand. God tells us in his Word that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we are to honor God with our bodies. I Cor. 6: 19-20 The behaviors of an ED are a violation of one of God's direct commands. This is hard to hear, and I didn't want to hear it either, but it isn't meant to bring condemnation. I tell you this and God tells us this to bring a burning hope to your hurting life. You have a God who promises forgiveness, freedom and victory. Knowing that Christ died for your sins and already gave his chosen the victory shows us that true and complete freedom exists.

The devil enjoys placing a mirror in front of you, and wants you to see your image through his eyes. He wants you to believe that you are ugly and imperfect and that only he will give you what you need. His mirror is full of lies and bondage. Now look into God's mirror. His mirror is clean, it's perfect and it's full of truth. He tells you that you are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psa. 139:14). He tells you how much you are loved (Eph. 2:4, 5). He tells you that he is always with you (Heb. 13:5), that you have a purpose (Jer. 29:11), and it's absolutely wonderful. He tells you that you have nothing to fear (Psa. 91:4-8). He tells you that you are beautiful! You will be a shining gem in his crown of righteousness; he is polishing and shaping you in this life so that you fit into his place for you in heaven. You may feel dull and tarnished right now, but God is bringing you through this and will bring you out of this and the dirty and ugly spots on that gem will be gone. Throw away the chains of bondage and the mirror the devil has had you stare into, and walk in freedom, holding before you God's mirror. He loves you with an everlasting love and will give you grace to walk

in freedom. You are his, and he will not let you go. Cling to his mercy. “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children” (Psa. 103:17).

It may be difficult to believe that God has given hope to you especially when life is hurting and you don’t feel you deserve or believe in God’s mercy. But it’s time to believe truth. God doesn’t give things in our life according to our own merit. We don’t deserve anything from God, but God still desires to give us good things and loves us, even when it’s hard to feel! No matter what has led you to the point of hopelessness, God has always been there and he loves you.

I know what it is like to flinch at God’s touch, to be unsure and not trust in his plan for me. It took me many months surrounded by God’s Word and amazing people he placed through a place called Mercy Ministries. I finally had to surrender my control and realize that God was and is completely in control. I wasn’t going to find peace and freedom in an ED or anything else. It took me being fed wholly God’s word and having truth spoken daily. The only one who could give me true peace and complete freedom was God. I had built walls; my walls were very high, and I thought that if I built them high enough I wouldn’t be hurt and God couldn’t touch me. I wanted nothing to do with him in my life, but God’s presence and love doesn’t have walls. He was constantly holding me, even when I was kicking and screaming and even when I denied him and took the devil’s hand. He had already given me freedom when Jesus died and gave all his people the victory. I had to look directly at him and the cross and cling to that alone, not to myself or the devil. I had to see that God was healing me; I had to put my past in his hands and give up what control I thought I had. I had to forgive as he forgave me. I had to kneel with my face in the dirt and give my all for him. Only then could I experience freedom.

It may seem easier said than done, and I know that personally. Complete freedom has been given to us by Jesus Christ, but we won’t experience that complete freedom till we reach heaven. The life of a Christian comes with struggles. I had all the confidence in myself that I wouldn’t struggle again. Here is where my fault lies; I need to put confidence in God. I realize that I am not unsusceptible to the devil because I went to Mercy Ministries and because I went through some hard things at a young age. I am going to struggle daily and my whole life with sin, and with the wounds of sin. I am learning even now of the exhausting spiritual battle. The devil knows my weaknesses and knows when I am vulnerable. It is a tiring fight, but therein lies the key. We need to continue fighting, never give up and give in. We have the assurance that God is always on our side and is fighting the battle for and with us.

*Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me*

*I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.*

*My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, amazing grace.*

*The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.*

*My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, amazing grace.*

*My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, amazing grace.*

*The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God who called me here below
Will be forever mine, will be forever mine
You are forever mine.*

—Chris Tomlin